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DROID TRI-FIGHTER

Deadly Confederacy starfighter

Buzz droids

Mustafar – lava planet

DeAGOSTINI

LUCAS BOOKS

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STAR WARS

"TEN VULTURE DROIDS STRAIGHT AHEAD, COMING DOWN THE LEFT SIDE."
"ADD FIVE TRI-FIGHTERS ON THE RIGHT..."

ANAKIN SKYWALKER AND OBI-WAN KENOBI

From the blockade of Naboo onwards, the deadly droidekas struck fear into the hearts of Republic ground troops. The next product to come from the droideka's designers, Colicoid Creation Nest, was the droid tri-fighter. This fearsome automated starfighter achieved in space combat what the destroyer droids had done on the ground.

DROID TRI-FIGHTER

CREATION OF THE COLICOIDS

During one of their earliest appearances during the latter stages of the Clone Wars, the droid tri-fighters made an immediate impact. Only the intervention of Anakin Skywalker saved Jedi ace pilot Saesee Tiin from three of the new starfighters. It was obvious from the outset that this new Separatist vessel was a significant threat to the Republic.

The Colicoid Creation Nest was best known for the droidekas – the rolling, heavily shielded, fearsomely armed battle droids that more often than not caused clone troopers and Jedi alike to retreat. The Confederacy of Independent Systems turned again to the voracious, cannibalistic insectoids of Colla IV to design and manufacture a starfighter capable of taking on the Jedi starfighters and the Republic's ARC-170 and V-wing starfighters. While the droidekas took their design inspiration from the Colicoids themselves, the tri-fighters were based on the stripped skulls of one of Colla IV's long-extinct predatory species.

Aggression

The Colicoids had never been content to have their droids slaves to a central computer. Droidekas had been designed to operate independently, and this was the case with the tri-fighter. The look of the starfighter, with its three rigid arms seeming to protect the central

gyroscopically mounted core, suggested the droid brain was located there. In fact, the central sphere housed the powerful reactor core. The ship's astoundingly compact brain was located forward of the core, wrapped around the capacitors of the main laser cannon. The ship was programmed to be cunning and hugely aggressive, using its main medium laser cannon, three light laser cannon and variable missile load to full effect. The weapons could target together or entirely independently, with the light laser cannon able to pivot slightly in order to target opponents better. Between two and six missiles could be loaded inside each of the three arms. Mounts under the reactor core were usually reserved for discord missiles, which despatched buzz droids to harass their opponents.

Defence Measures

The hull, while normally remaining unshielded, was very tough, but the fighters' agility was usually able to keep it out of trouble. This was thanks to the three independent thrusters, each of which featured two ion-emission acceleration chambers. This gave the tri-fighter acceleration and manoeuvring that only a droid – or a Jedi – could endure, particularly in atmospheric flight.

Effective

Though introduced late to the Separatist fleet, the tri-fighters cut great swathes of destruction through the Republic's starfighters – usually operating in groups of three. The Republic's losses were so severe that it was fortunate that the droid tri-fighter did not appear earlier in the Clone Wars.

TRI-FIGHTER ATTACK!

FORMIDABLE FOES FOR THE JEDI

The Republic first encountered the tri-fighter in significant numbers at the Battle of Praesitlyn. They formed part of Admiral Pors Tonith's fleet, and annihilated the T-19 starfighters of the Praesitlyn Defence Force. Their presence made the Republic's counter-attack, led by Jedi Master Nejaa Halcyon, all the more difficult.

Such was the effect of the tri-fighters' first engagements that, despite the expense of the vessels, the Separatists posted tri-fighters to all of their major fleet groups and outposts, including Saleucami and Belderone. The Republic fought them again at the Battle of Boz Pity, one of the last major engagements before the Battle of Coruscant. However, it was during the Separatist assault on the galactic capital world that tri-fighters were unleashed in large numbers.

Despite the twin threats of tri-fighters and buzz droids, Obi-Wan and Anakin were still victorious at the Battle of Coruscant.

Battle of Coruscant

General Grievous was charged with kidnapping Supreme Chancellor Palpatine – actually the very architect of the Clone Wars, Darth Sidious himself. The space battle and the skirmishes on the surface of the planet were distractions to allow Grievous to snatch Palpatine. The attacks had to look convincing to fool the Jedi, so the valuable and deadly tri-fighters featured heavily.

Droid Damage

In space, the droid fighters quickly devastated the Republic's ARC-170 fighter squadrons. On the surface of Coruscant, their strafing runs in support of invading battle droids caused huge damage, and kept the likes of Jedi Masters Yoda and Mace Windu tied up long enough for Grievous to strike. By the time Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker arrived above Coruscant, Grievous had already captured his prey and reached his command ship.

The Jedi Generals came with the first ships of the Fifth Fleet of the Open Circle Fleet. While the Star Destroyers and ARC-170s engaged Grievous' forces, Anakin and Obi-Wan took Clone Flight Squad Seven with them on an attack on Grievous' ship, the *Invisible Hand*. They were engaged by tri-fighters, who destroyed many of the clone ships. Buzz droids disabled Obi-Wan's ship, but the two Jedi still managed to reach *Invisible Hand* and eventually rescue Palpatine.

THE B2 SUPER BATTLE DROID

BUILDING A BETTER BATTLE DROID

The Trade Federation invasion of Naboo came to an abrupt and inglorious end when the destruction of the droid control ship turned the Federation army into immobile scrap metal. The B1 battle droid had proved too limited and vulnerable in combat. Lessons were learned, and the B2 super battle droid was the result.

The B1 battle droid had never been intended as an elite soldier unit. Rather, it was designed as a cheap and expendable infantry weapon that won battles through sheer weight of numbers. Not only was the B1 slow to react, being entirely reliant on a central control computer, but many of the battle droid's vital control systems were there for opponents to see and to target. If B1s became isolated from the droid control signal, broadcast from an orbiting ship, the droids would quickly shut down and could literally fall apart as their electromagnetic joints failed. Even in successful actions, the link between the troops and the control ship caused problems. The time it took for information to be processed before new orders could be issued resulted in confusion and destruction both of lives and, vitally to the avaricious Trade Federation, property.

After Naboo

It was clear, following the Naboo debacle, that tactics needed to change. While the B1 was upgraded to include some limited autonomy from the droid control ship, the basic battle droid remained otherwise unaltered. A need was recognised, however, for a heavy infantry unit that did not suffer from the same battlefield weaknesses. This gap in the Trade Federation military – and that of the forces of the later Confederacy of Independent Systems – was filled by the B2 super battle droid. Prototypes saw limited action beforehand, but the B2 was properly 'unveiled' at the Battle of Geonosis. Its superior armour and firepower claimed the lives of many Jedi who

The B2 super battle droids were better armed and armoured than their predecessors, and had a limited degree of independence from any droid command signal system. They could even be trusted as bodyguards.

PROFILE

B2 super battle droid

Height

1.93m

Manufacturer

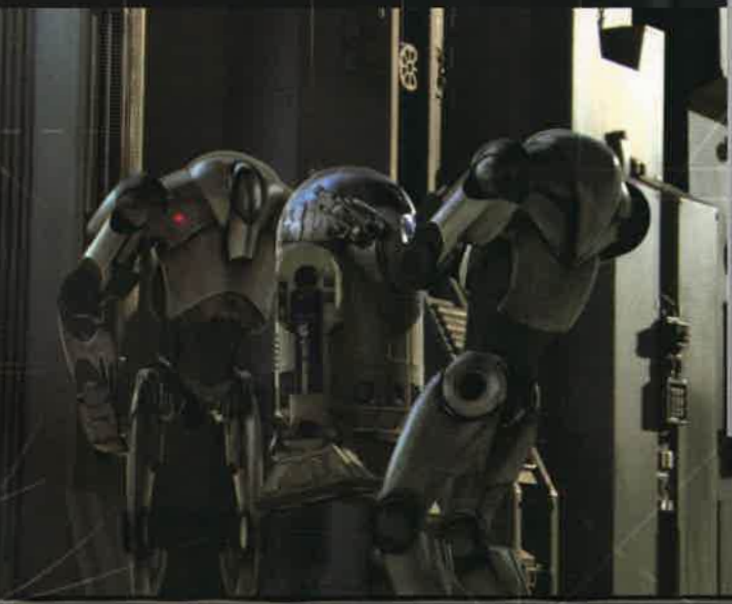
Baktoid Combat Automata

Weapons

Integrated dual laser cannon, optional rocket launcher

Affiliation

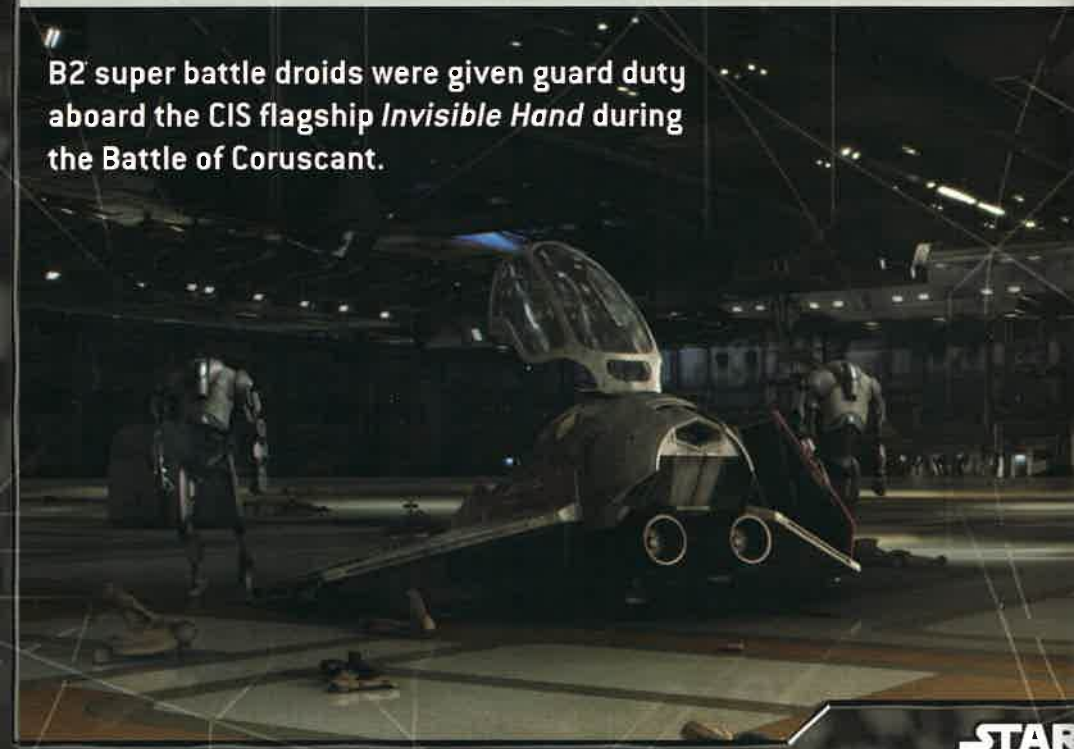
Trade Federation, CIS



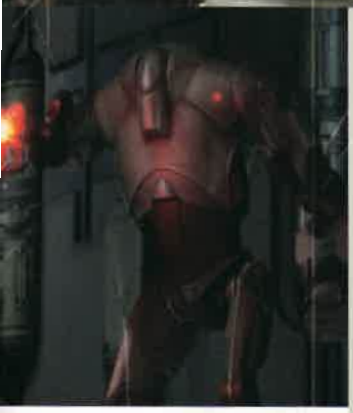
had not expected such opposition. More aggressive and quicker than their B1 predecessors, the B2s charged into the Geonosian arena, firing as they came, even batting aside slower B1s that got in their way.

Heavily Armoured

Though the B2 super battle droid used many standard parts from the B1 droids, this was for efficiency of manufacture and not a project-crippling cost-saving measure. By no means was the B2 compromised. Unlike its more exposed predecessor, the super battle droid hid its components in a cryogenically tempered body shell. The production method ensured that the hardened sections retained a degree of flexibility which prevented the armour from cracking and breaking apart. The body shell was further strengthened with thick acertron armour that protected the upper body, including the primary power unit, signal receptor and droid brain located in the chest. The primary transceiver units, located in the shoulders, were protected in the same way. The droids' red, glowing photoreceptor sensor was set in the left shoulder. With so many of the B2's systems hidden away behind



B2 super battle droids were given guard duty aboard the CIS flagship *Invisible Hand* during the Battle of Coruscant.



Behind the Scenes

"Initially, George didn't want to update the droids (in Episode II). In Episode I, he'd made them clumsy, awkward machines. But as he was writing the script for Episode II, he decided we needed a bigger, stronger, next-generation battle droid."
Doug Chiang

armour, excess heat was a danger. Radiator vanes built into the calves vented most of the internally generated heat, but early models of the droid were extremely vulnerable to the effects of fire.

Aggressive Character

B2 battle droids lacked fingers, meaning they couldn't use standard blasters in the same way the B1s could. When necessary, they were issued with external weaponry that responded only to coded signal emitters built into the droids' hands. However, B2 droids had modular arms that could be swapped out for mission-specific ordnance or equipment. Most commonly, the left forearm was replaced with a rocket launcher. The standard weapon on the B2 was the dual laser cannon fitted to the right forearm, and occasionally to both arms. When not in use, the forearm locked upright to prevent damaging misfires.
Super battle droids could vocalise in a deep, guttural Galactic Basic Standard. Along with their looming appearance and bullying mannerisms, the B2s were very threatening. They often charged into battle – an unsubtle but deeply intimidating tactic. Though independent, they were most effective when given additional coordinating tactical information from a droid control ship. As with their B1 cousins, the super battle droids were not very intelligent, even forgetting about targets once they moved out of visual range.

MUNIFICENT-CLASS STAR FRIGATE

FIST OF THE BANKING CLAN

The *Munificent*-class frigate, known more often as the Banking Clan frigate, became a standard feature of Confederacy fleet groups during the Clone Wars. Mounting powerful weapons on a thin frame, these frigates packed a powerful punch.

With a crew of a mere 200, the 825 metre-long Banking Clan frigates were stripped down to bare essentials. The ship was a near-skeleton, held together by tensor fields and dedicated inertial compensators running along the longitudinal spines of the vessel. Though the frigates had docking rings and carried up to 150,000 deactivated battle droids, they were not intended for any purpose other than capital ship combat.

Over-Powered

The *Munificent*-class frigate positively bristled with weapons – so much so that four of them could significantly outgun the far larger Republic *Venator*-class Star Destroyer. The frigates' truly huge fore-mounted twin turbolaser cannon was backed up by two long-range ion cannon and were justly feared by Republic captains. Strong in attack, the 38 point-defence laser cannon, 26 twin turbolaser cannon and 20 light turbolaser turrets meant that the frigate could sweep aside all but the most concerted starfighter assault. Added to this, the sensors and scanners the *Munificent*-class carried meant that surprising one was almost entirely impossible. However, the Banking Clan frigates had another weapon in their arsenal.

Comms Assault

Prior to their posting as part of the CIS fleet, the InterGalactic Banking Clan used the ships as part of their private communications network, as well as an instrument of punishment and debt securing. The ship carried powerful hyperwave transceivers and a comms array that could punch through most jamming signals to coordinate Separatist assaults, as well as crippling an enemy's communications, sensor and targeting packages. Additionally, to rub salt in the wound, the ships were used to broadcast demoralising anti-Republic propaganda galaxy-wide.

PROFILE Banking Clan frigate

Type

Munificent-class Star Frigate

Length

825 metres

Weapons

1 x twin turbolaser, 2 x long-range ion cannon, 38 x point-defence laser cannon, 26 x twin turbolaser cannon, 20 x light turbolaser turrets

Affiliation

InterGalactic Banking Clan, Confederacy of Independent Systems

'Munificent' comes from a Latin word meaning 'generous', despite this not being one of the characteristics associated with the Banking Clan.

DROID TRI-FIGHTER

AUTOMATED COMBAT CRAFT

The approach of a flight of tri-fighters was enough to strike dread into the hearts of opposing starfighter pilots. It was bad enough that the heavily armed droid fighters were quick, agile and well-armoured. On top of this, they often unleashed discord missiles packed with destructive buzz droids that hacked ships to pieces around their pilots.

DROID TRI-FIGHTER

Type
Automated (droid) starfighter

Designers
Colicoid Creation Nest

Manufacturers
Colla Designs, Phlac-Arphocc Automata Industries

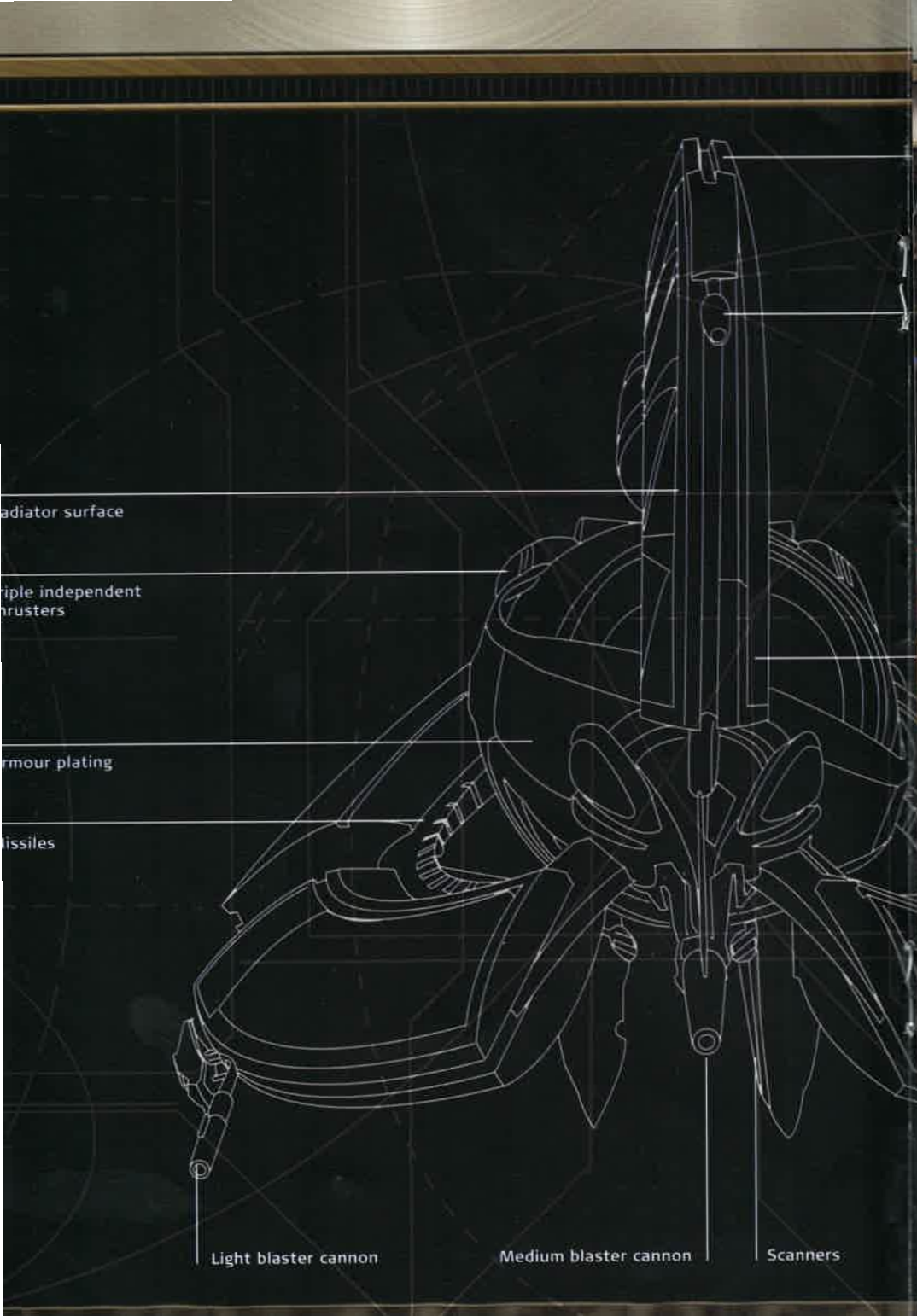
Size
5.4m long, 3.45m wide

Speed
37,000km/h (in atmosphere)

Max. acceleration
3,600G (in space)

Weapons
1x medium laser cannon, 3x light laser cannon, 3x variable load 2 to 6 missiles, 2x discord missiles (optional load)

Affiliation
Confederacy of Independent Systems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Medium blaster cannon
Scanners

Advanced communication transceiver

Blaster cannon

Radiator surface

Light blaster cannon

A droid tri-fighter had neith
tough little ships possesse
other CIS droid starfighters
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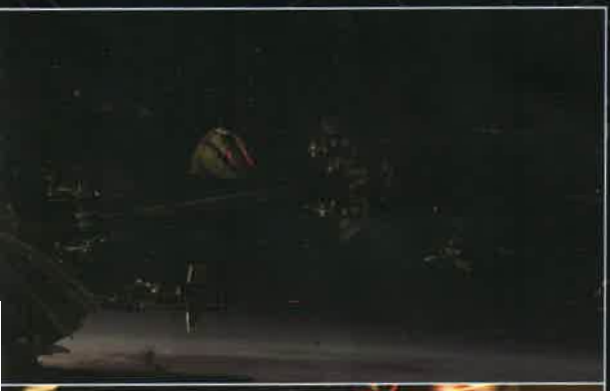


Assets

ation Nest created the tri-fighter, the discord missiles
nd the buzz droids carried in those missiles. The Nest
that giving their craft animalistic qualities increased
d threat of their weapons of war. The buzz droids,
elatively fragile and disposable assets, were made to
itter like vicious insects, further unnerving the pilots
they were destroying. Scared pilots were less likely to
– although this was not a problem for Jedi.

PISTOEKA SABOTAGE DROID

CONFEDERACY BUZZ DROID

Though the buzz droid was a late addition to the CIS arsenal, these small metal piranhas quickly sowed fear amongst opponents of the Separatists. Pilots dreaded the day that their ships would be stripped apart from under them.

Introduced around the same time as the droid tri-fighter that carried them into battle, pistoeka sabotage droids were designed to disable starships, not destroy them – though the general effect in a pitched battle was the same. When the CIS commanders wanted to capture a fleeing vessel and leave its living contents intact, ion fire was not always reliable, particularly if the target ship was appropriately shielded. Buzz droids got around this.

Bully Buzz

Getting the buzz droids close enough to their victims was the job of the dedicated discord missile, designed by the Colicoid Creation Nest, creators of the droids themselves. The discord missile 'detonated' when in the flight path of the target, disgorging a clutch of sabotage droid spheres. The tiny droids – only a quarter of a metre in diameter – even had small manoeuvring jets to allow them to hit their targets. The heat-dissipating alloy on the spherical shell of the buzz droid ensured that it could slip past a vessel's shields, using a magnetic pad to secure itself to the hull. Immediately on landing, the buzz droids' shock-absorbing shells snapped open and the chittering droids went to work. Their triple sensors could see into numerous spectra, allowing the droids to work out where they were and what systems to assault. Pre-loaded with schematics of many of their opponent's ships, the droids were murderously fast and efficient. Their creepy, insect-like appearance added to their fearsome reputation. The sabotage droids weren't only used in the vacuum of space. On occasion, swarms of the droids were used to attack infantry, with horrifying results.

PROFILE

Buzz droid

Type

Sabotage droid

Designer

Colicoid Creation Nest

Size

0.25m

Weapons

Drills, plasma torches, circular saws, prising hooks, pincers

Affiliation

CIS

Invasive Procedures

Buzz droids used a great many devices to cut, prise and smash their way into the vital parts of an enemy ship. Once key internals were exposed, the droids could destroy them or even use a probe to hack computer systems and release crippling virus software.

MUSTAFAR

THE HEAT OF BATTLE

The unstable, volcanic Outer Rim world of Mustafar will always be known as the place where Anakin Skywalker completed his fall to the dark side. However, the planet had already seen a great battle between Jedi and Sith – one that changed Mustafar forever.

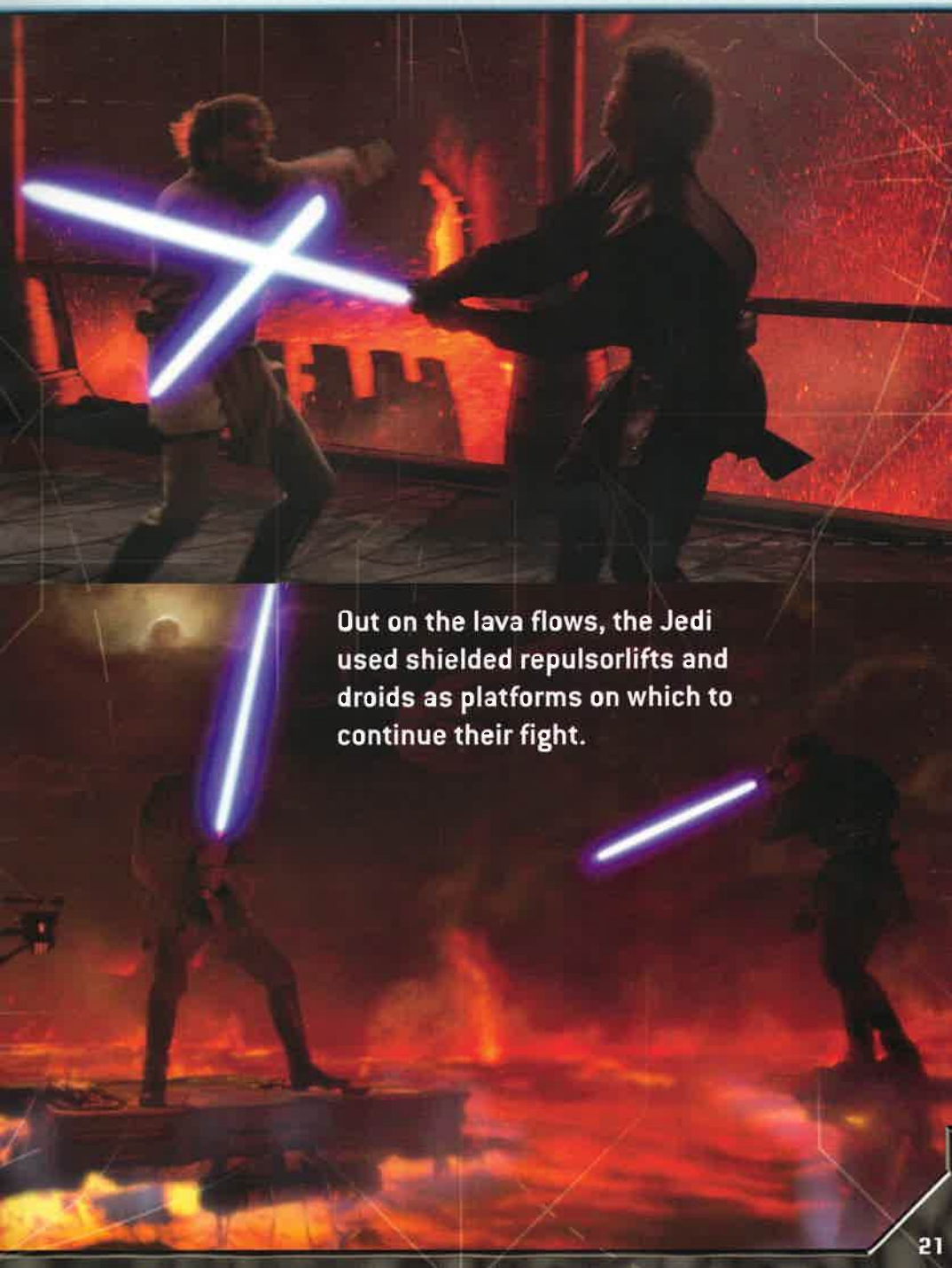
Once a beautiful, fertile world, Mustafar had been settled by Jedi many thousands of years before the Clone Wars. A number of Jedi training enclaves were established there. Over a millennium after the first Jedi came to the planet, the Great Sith War came to Mustafar. So great was the struggle between dark and light that the orbit of the world was altered, locking Mustafar between the gravitational pull of gas giants Jestefad and Lefrani. Despite winning the battle, the Jedi had to abandon the planet to its fiery fate.

Mustafar Aflame

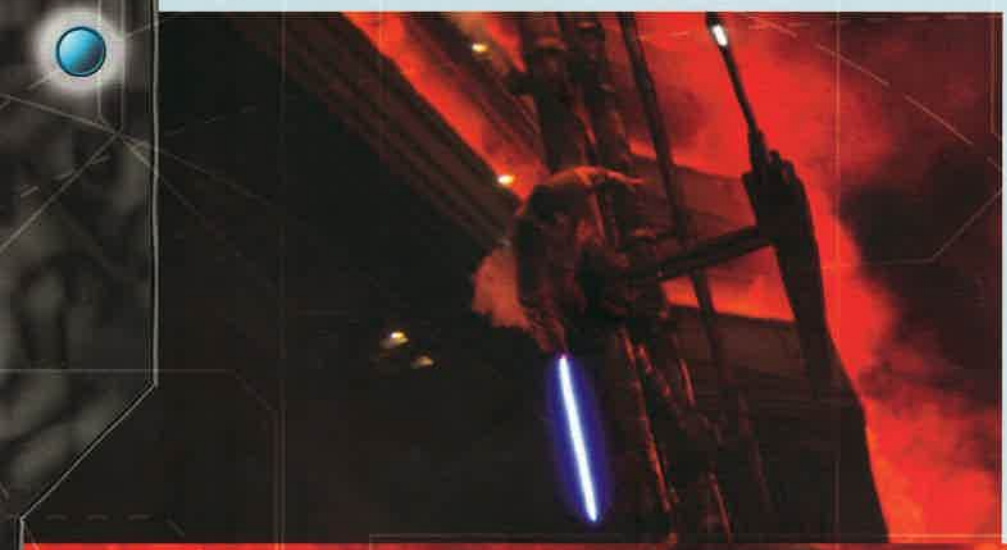
Some 250 years before the Clone Wars, Mustafar was rediscovered. The liquid rock flows were rich in valuable minerals, and the planet was quickly taken over by the Techno Union and mined by one of its subsidiaries, Klegger Corp. The main mining facility hid many secrets, including a full battle droid factory built there during the Clone Wars. The non-industrial sections of the facility were far larger than necessary, allowing for it to be used as the last command centre for the Separatist Council. The facility was heavily built and shielded, with repulsorlifts and tensor fields everywhere, to prevent the volcanic environment from tearing it apart.

Jedi Duel

When Anakin, renamed Darth Vader by his new master, fought with Obi-Wan Kenobi in and around the Klegger Corp facility, their lightsaber duel ranged through the facility control room. Stray blows destroyed the control boards and shut down the shields. Various projecting sections were doused with lava, melting and collapsing into the superheated flood.



Out on the lava flows, the Jedi used shielded repulsorlifts and droids as platforms on which to continue their fight.



"From my point of view, the Jedi are evil. This is the end for you, my Master."

Darth Vader

Mining Mustafar

Though the Techno Union brought new technology to Mustafar, they still relied on the Mustafarians, with all their hard-won experience, to run the operations. The main Klegger Corp facility used huge collecting arms to scan for and suck up valuable ores from the surrounding lava flows. However, the hardy Mustafarians still collected samples of raw, liquid ore in handheld containers, riding lava fleas as often as modern shielded repulsorlift platforms. Data from their tests helped the facility target collector droids. These operations continued long after the Techno Union left.

Life Finds A Way

The sentient people of Mustafar had evolved from an arthropod species found in volcanic caves. Over five millennia, the Mustafarian civilisation evolved to exploit the liquid resources of their volatile world, even trading with the few adventurous souls able to visit the small planet. Two distinct sub-species of Mustafarians existed – a slender, taller group dubbed northern Mustafarians, and the smaller, stockier southern variety. The sub-species coexisted peacefully – there was enough to contend with on Mustafar without exacerbating their hardships with a civil war. Farming fungus and non-sentient insects, the northern Mustafarians in particular domesticated the remarkable four-metre-high 'lava fleas' – armoured arthropod creatures adept at leaping up to 30 metres at a time across the lava flows of the planet. The Mustafarians even used lava-flea carapaces as armour to protect against lava splashes.

Techno Union Takeover

Some 300 years before Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi duelled amongst the lava flows, the Techno Union 'rediscovered' Mustafar. They offered the Mustafarians, who cared nothing for affairs beyond their world, the benefits of Techno Union technology in return for the chance to exploit the planet's resources. The Mustafarians agreed, happy to see an easing of their living conditions and eager to explore the harsher parts of their world in order to harness the resources to be found there. True to form, they quickly took over any surviving facilities when the end of the Clone Wars left them empty, returning to a way of life otherwise untouched by galactic events.

VISUAL EFFECTS
CREATING MUSTAFAR

The release of Episode III was a major event for fans for many reasons, principal amongst which was the final fall of Anakin Skywalker and his fiery transformation into Darth Vader. Mustafar would be the setting for a duel that had long been part of *Star Wars* myth.

During the concept stages of *Return of the Jedi*, Luke was to battle Darth Vader over a lava lake in the depths of the Emperor's citadel on the Imperial homeworld. It was 'known' by fans that Darth Vader needed to wear his life-supporting armour because of injuries he received in a duel with Obi-Wan over a volcano. Indeed, the novelisation of *Return of the Jedi* would state as much. In the dialogue between Luke and Obi-Wan's Force spirit on Dagobah, Obi-Wan remembers: "When I saw what had become of him, I tried to dissuade him, to draw him back from the dark side. We fought… your father fell into a molten pit." This was a key moment for fans, and the anticipation was immense.

Mufasta to Mustafar

On 7 June, 2002, taking their inspiration from selected images in Joe Johnstone's concept work for *Return of the Jedi*, as well as reference photos, artists Ryan Church and Erik Tiemens began to explore the environments of the volcano planet of Mufasta. By October, they were joined by artist Warren Fu. In a meeting on 31 October, Lucas confirmed that Anakin and Obi-Wan would fight on the volcanic world but many of the exteriors and interiors had been explored for some time with that in mind. By the end of 2002, the planet was known as Mustafar, and the majority of the elements that would make the planet as a whole, and the duel in particular, so memorable were in place. Even the lava fleas!

Lucas on Mustafar

"These are old, old, old. Mufastar's been around a long time. I've always had this set-piece: the end between Obi-Wan and Anakin. I knew that's where this movie was going to end up. It's all this volcanic land, with lava shooting up, so it's monochromatic in its red and blackness. I've had this image with me for a long time." George Lucas, 2002

Real-World Inspiration

Mount Etna on the Italian island of Sicily was scouted by the *Revenge of the Sith* team. They were looking to take photographs to use in creating realistic backdrops for the climactic duel between Vader and Kenobi. As though on cue, the mountain erupted, allowing the filming of actual lava flows by cinematographer Ron Fricke and producer Rick McCallum. The resulting sequences provided the film-makers with a cheaper, less time-consuming and more convincing option than relying entirely on special effects. Still, there was a great deal of special effects work to do, with the Mustafar sequences being realised through a mix of CGI, detailed miniatures with working 'lava' flows, and green-screen digital filming of the actors playing out the battle scenes.

THE DROID TRI-FIGHTER

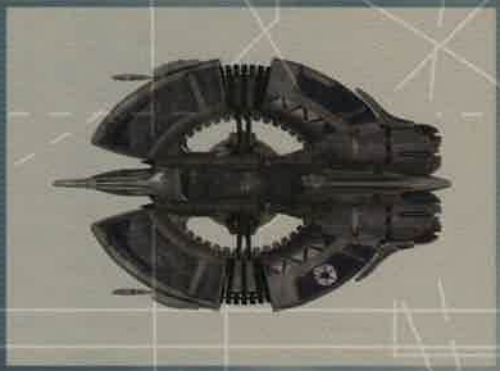
DELIVERING THE DEADLY DROID

CREATING THE DROID TRI-FIGHTER

1 The droid tri-fighter was an entirely digital creation.

2 Early versions of the ship were saucer-shaped, echoing the Trade Federation ships first seen in Episode I (above).

5 The glowing photoreceptors at the front of the tri-fighter give it a vicious glare.



6 The discord missiles slung under the tri-fighter are packed with dangerous buzz droids.

The tri-fighter was originally called the tri-droid. During preproduction, that name was changed, and the tri-droid became the massive tripods seen at the Battle of Mygeeto in Episode III, and in the Battle of Christophsis in the *Clone Wars* animated film and series.

3 The design was gradually reworked, eventually getting an extra curving arm to wrap protectively around the spherical centre.

4 This rear view clearly shows the three engines that give the tri-fighter its incredible speed and agility.

7 As well as the two discord missiles, the tri-fighter carries between two and six smaller missiles in each arm.

8 The tri-fighter droid in action!

1 Who has the last word in the duel between Darth Vader and Obi-Wan in Episode III?

2 What was the inspiration for the buzz droids?

3 What central design 'code' for the ships of the Classic Trilogy does the Prequel Trilogy deliberately invert?

ANSWERS:

1. Obi-Wan has the last word – "You were my brother, Anakin. I loved you."

2. The frantic, cackling glee with which the buzz droids set about their destructive tasks was inspired by the gremlins – non-existent mischievous critters that RAF pilots serving in Malta, the Middle East and India used to blame for faults that their aircraft developed. They were first mentioned in 1929, but became 'popular' in WWII.

3. In the Classic Trilogy, 'evil' ships were more angular and sharp, while 'good' ships were more rounded and organic. This code is inverted for the Prequel Trilogy.

R

Ree-Yees

Character
Episode VI

Convicted of murder on the Gran homeworld of Kinyen, Ree-Yees escaped. He ended up, a gibbering drunk, in the court of Jabba the Hutt – a character whom the Hutt so mistrusted that he had a small bomb implanted in Ree-Yees, ready to explode if Jabba spoke a certain key-phrase. Ree-Yees worked with Tessek, a Quarren, and the Imperial Prefect of Tatooine to build and plant a bomb on Jabba's sail barge. The plot was foiled when Jabba's pet Frog-Dog ate the detonator. Instead, Ree-Yees planted a thermal detonator on the barge, but died there before it went off when Leia Organa turned the main gun on the deck during her escape with Luke Skywalker and friends.

Reek

Creature
Episode II

Relatively harmless but territorial quadruped herbivores which were starved, then fed meat, before appearing in the arenas of Geonosis. This turned the reeks' skin red and made them aggressive. Anakin Skywalker managed to tame one to use as a mount until Jango Fett shot it.

Rendar, Dash

Character
Expanded Universe

Corellian Dash Rendar, an ace pilot at the Imperial Academy on Carida, was forced into the life of a freelance 'freighter pilot' after his wealthy family was exiled by the Empire. When they refused to join the criminal organisation Black Sun, Prince Xizor, head of the organisation, arranged for a sabotaged transport belonging to the family business to crash into the Emperor's private museum on Coruscant. Rendar escaped the Imperial wrath and became a smuggler. During the Rebellion's hunt for the carbon-frozen Han Solo, Dash was able to assist in bringing down Prince Xizor, though it was Darth Vader's flagship that destroyed him.

Restraining bolt

Technology
Episodes I to VI

Restraining separator bolts were fitted to droids to shut down their motor functions and prevent them leaving an area defined by their owners. Using a 'caller', a droid fitted with a bolt could be instructed to stop, go, move in a particular direction or return to the owner.

Rex, Clone Captain

Character
Expanded Universe

Designated CC-7567, Rex was a clone trooper captain who worked closely with Jedi General Anakin Skywalker during the Clone Wars. He was often teamed up with Commander Cody, with the two becoming friends. He was promoted to the rank of captain after the Battle of Geonosis and commanded Torrent Company, part of the 501st Legion. His association with Skywalker led to Rex becoming one of the more imaginative commanders in the clone ranks.

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